

**REMARKS**

**A. Background**

The present amendment is filed in response to the Examiner's Office Action mailed October 23, 2006. Claims 1-26 were pending. Claims 1 and 8 are amended. Claims 1-26 remain pending in view of the above amendments.

Reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and following remarks. For the Examiner's convenience and reference, Applicant's remarks are presented in the order in which the corresponding issues were raised in the Office Action.

**B. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102**

The Office Action rejects claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) or (e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,773,206 to Bradley *et al.* ("Bradley"). However, *Bradley* – assuming *arguendo* that it qualifies as a reference under Section 102 – fails to teach each and every element of the pending claims and thus fails to anticipate the present claimed invention under Section 102.

Specifically, the present claimed invention is substantially distinct from any device taught by *Bradley*. In particular, amended independent claim 8 requires, in a multi-portion column assembly, the presence of a first column portion and a second column portion, the second column portion including a first plurality of surface features, the first column portion having a backing member and flange with a second plurality of surface features that cooperatively intermesh with the first plurality of surface features, "*wherein at least one of the first and second plurality of surface features is defined as a result of the mating of the first and second column portions.*"

*Bradley* simply teaches no such structure as that required above. Indeed, while *Bradley* discloses male and female connectors 30 and 31, they are formed, by extruding for example, such that each includes double serrations that oppose one another when the connectors are fastened to the inside surface of the jacket 3. *Bradley*, col. 6, ll. 22-40; Figs. 8, 9. It is clear that the both connector serrations are pre-formed, not defined as a result of mating of the jacket as explicitly required in claim 8.

Consequently, *Bradley* fails to teach or suggest each and every element of claim 8, and thus cannot be used to anticipate the present invention. Further, inasmuch as claims 9-12 are variously dependent on claim 8, they are also allowable for at least the reasons given above. Applicant therefore submits that each of the above claims is patentably distinct and requests that the Section 102 rejection in view of *Bradley* be withdrawn.

**C. Allowable Subject Matter**

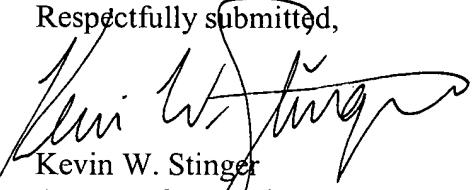
Claims 9-12 are objected to for being dependent upon rejected base claim 8. However, Applicant submits that claims 9-12 are allowable for their dependence on independent claim 8, which is considered allowable in light of the above remarks. Removal of the objection to claims 9-12 is therefore respectfully solicited.

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for allowance of claims 1-7 and 13-26.

**CONCLUSION**

In view of the discussion and amendments submitted herein, Applicant respectfully submits that each of the pending claims 1-26 is now in condition for allowance and that all objections to the application have been resolved. Therefore, reconsideration of the rejections and objections is requested and allowance of those claims is respectfully solicited. In the event that the Examiner finds any remaining impediment to a prompt allowance of this application that can be clarified in a telephonic interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to initiate the same with the undersigned attorney.

Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2007.

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